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C.O. Theme - Opening and hold under for
ANN: This is a broadcast by the Premier of South Australia,
Mr. Don Dunstan, on behalf of the Australian Labor Party.

GOOD EVENING:

THIS AFTERNOON IN PARLIAMENT THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ASKED A SIMPLE BUT LOADED QUESTION OF ME. HE ASKED ME WHETHER IT IS TRUE THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF THE PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT, MR. DOUG CLAESSEN, WAS SOON TO BE NAMED AS THE NEXT POLICE COMMISSIONER IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, FOLLOWING THE PERSISTENT RUMOURS WHICH HAD CIRCULATED ABOUT THIS POSSIBILITY.

NOW THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ASKED THIS QUESTION AT ABOUT FIVE MINUTES PAST TWO, JUST WHEN THE SECOND EDITION OF "THE NEWS" WAS APPEARING ON THE STREETS OF ADELAIDE. AND HE MENTIONED THAT THE STORY OF THE RUMOUR WAS ON THE FRONT PAGE OF "THE NEWS".

FURTHERMORE, EARLIER IN THE DAY MR. CLAESSEN HIMSELF HAD BEEN RUNG BY MEMBERS OF THE POLICE FORCE WHO TOLD HIM THAT THE STORY WAS GOING TO APPEAR, AND WHEN A MEMBER OF MY STAFF RANG "THE NEWS" AND INFORMED THEM THAT THERE WAS NO BASIS AT ALL TO THE RUMOUR, HE WAS TOLD THAT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE EDITOR WOULD STOP USING THE STORY.

NOW WHAT IS ESPECIALLY SHOCKING ABOUT THIS BASELESS, ERRONEOUS, AND TOTALLY IDIOTIC STORY IS THAT IT IS A PUBLIC EXAMPLE OF THE KINDS OF ACRID AND SCURRILOUS NONSENSE WHICH PERIODICALLY CIRCULATES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AND WHICH HAS MADE THE STATE THE POLITICAL SMEAR CENTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH. AND THE IMPLICATIONS ARE PLAIN - AND THEY ARE ONES WHICH ANY DECENT-MINDED PERSON WILL HEED - WHEN OUR OPPONENTS CAN'T BEAT US ON POLICIES AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT, THEIR ONLY ANSWER IS TO WILDLY SLING MUD.

AND OF COURSE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE QUALITY OF FAIR REPORTING AND ACCURATE JOURNALISM ARE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT. ONE OF THE POINTS ABOUT A FREE PRESS IS THAT IT IS, ESPECIALLY IN THE DOMESTIC AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT, ALSO A FAIR PRESS. PEOPLE EXPECT STORIES TO BE RUN WHEN THERE IS SOME BASIS OF FACT - AND OF COURSE IT IS ALSO A MATTER OF FAIR PLAY SIMPLY TO CHECK OUT THE DETAILS WITH THOSE MOST CONCERNED. WHAT WAS PARTICULARLY IRRESPONSIBLE ABOUT "THE NEW'S" STORY WAS THAT NOT ONLY DID IT NOT HAVE ANY FOUNDATION,

BUT NEITHER I NOR MY STAFF WAS APPROACHED FOR A CONFIRMATION OR DENIAL, AND WHEN "THE NEWS" WAS APPROACHED BY MY STAFF ON THE BASIS OF OUTSIDE INFORMATION AND A DENIAL WAS GIVEN, THE STORY WAS STILL PRINTED IN FULL, ON PAGE ONE, AND IN CRASHING BLACK BANNER HEADLINES.

NOW THE PARTICULAR AND PECULIAR CASE OF "THE NEWS" ASIDE, IF THERE IS ONE THING PEOPLE IN THIS STATE SHOULD BE SICKENED BY IT IS THE ILLITERATE, UNINFORMED, VISCIOUS AND PATHETIC RUMOUR-MONGERING THAT IS UNDERTAKEN AS PART AND PARCEL OF GUTTER-LEVEL POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING. POLITICAL CANVASSERS HAVE APPROACHED PEOPLE TELLING THEM NOT TO VOTE FOR ME, IN PARTICULAR, AS I AM, AS THEY SAY, "A HALF-CASTE MELANESIAN ORPHAN BASTARD". THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE STATE ELECTION, A FURTHER RUMOUR STARTED WHICH SAID THAT EACH FRIDAY I HAD TO GO AWAY FOR SHOCK TREATMENT. AND SO THEY GO ON: THEY ARE MANY, VARIED AND MULTI-COLOURED. THEY ARE ALSO FUNNY, PECULIAR, AND WET. IT IS A SAD DAY FOR THIS STATE WHEN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING SINKS TO THIS LEVEL.

GOODNIGHT.